

Barrington Region United Against CN Railroading

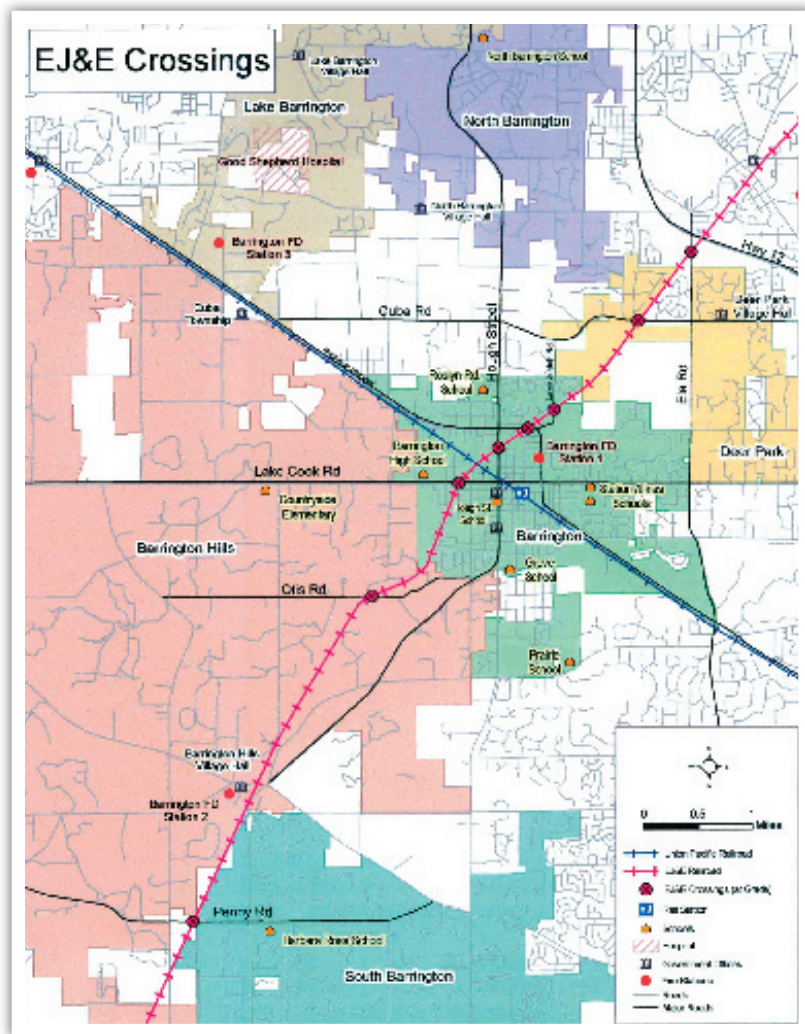


Karen Darch is the president of the Village of Barrington

Most of the time you can hear the train in the distance before you actually see it. Thanks to a mid-September 2007 Crain's Chicago Business article, we heard the rumblings that Canadian National Railroad (CN) was planning to purchase a little-used freight rail line that runs smack through the Village of Barrington (the EJ&E tracks that cross Northwest Highway by Citizens Park, Hough Street near Staples, and Main Street near Hager Nursery).

By the time news became official at the end of that month, the Village of Barrington had already been able to do the research and the community-leader outreach to make sure that our entire region was ready to help in what Barrington Village Trustee Tim Roberts has aptly called this century's "Battle of Barrington."

It didn't take long before all the community leaders in our area recognized that we had a community of interest in fighting this acquisition's staggering adverse impact on our region. For this reason, the Villages of Barrington Hills, Lake Barrington, North Barrington, South Barrington, Tower Lakes, and Deer Park, along with Cuba and Barrington Townships, have united with Barrington to support the public education and advocacy efforts needed to ensure that we aggressively defend our interests.



By now, most residents in the region are aware of the details surrounding this proposed acquisition (you can learn about the latest developments and how to get involved by visiting the regional coalition's Web site at www.FightRailCongestion.com).

In a nutshell, CN has applied to the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) seeking approval to purchase the EJ&E freight line for \$300 million from U.S. Steel. This has been a minor freight line for decades, so this acquisition – and CN's plans to use the line as a Chicago bypass route for all of its freight traffic that must pass through the

region – promises to make Barrington "ground zero" in a freight congestion nightmare affecting our entire region.

That will be the outcome unless the STB tells CN that its approval of the acquisition will only be granted after the railroad mitigates the critically adverse impacts our region can expect if this acquisition is approved. From blocked traffic flow and 911 emergency response delays to increases in noise, noxious fumes, and frustration with lengthy travel delays, we can't help but see the negatives of this acquisition for the Barrington region. You may have heard several of our village

leaders speaking about these impacts at recent village board meetings televised on Channel 4. This is in stark contrast to what the company's CEO, E. Hunter Harrison, has stated on the record with financial analysts and in the media about the transaction. He said, "From an operational strategic standpoint... its huge value to us. We have really maybe only scratched the surface on what the potential may be here down the line."

Barrington and the entire coalition are convinced that it is only through an in-depth review process by the STB that we will really understand the potential impact of this issue for the Barrington region for decades to come. We have been very active in this fight. We were the first community to weigh in with our concerns when we filed comments with the STB in mid-November 2007 asking the agency to undertake a thorough examination of how the region will be impacted. Fortunately, our initial efforts have not gone un-

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rewarded, as the STB ruled in late November that a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required for this transaction. Once we know what we should expect, we can better understand what mitigation options would work best for us and put a plan in place.

Our communities must stand together throughout these proceedings and make our case to the STB and the elected officials who can influence the outcome. No one else is going to do it for us. This region has always been at the forefront of helping those in need – whether it be in Hurricane Katrina relief with the Compassion Cottages program to Barrington Giving Day during the holidays. Now we need to help ourselves. This acquisition has the potential to change the quality of everyday life in a region we call home, so we need to remain vocal and united.

If you would like to join the effort on behalf of our villages, go to www.FightRailCongestion.com to understand what can be done at each step along the way as the battle evolves.